

# Book reviews

## Gorilla: Struggle for survival in the Virungas

George B. Schaller

Aperture, New York, 1989, 113 pp., HB \$39.95

Some months ago we were exposed to the worst book on matters relating to gorillas ever published—the wholly dreadful *Woman in the Mists* by Farley Mowat. We now have one of the best—*Gorilla* by Michael Nicholls and George B. Schaller. The emphasis is firmly back where it belongs, on the gorillas and their conservation.

Schaller's long introductory essay sets the scene perfectly; a calm, comprehensive presentation with up-to-date information and, for a welcome change, full recognition given to the many key players in the development of mountain gorilla conservation. At last the 1970s time-warped that characterizes so many books on the subject has been broken out of. Michael Nicholl's photographs are superb and accompany what I rate the most striking feature of all—the collection of quotes from the field workers themselves, expatriate and Rwandan. The resulting collage of statements rings true; here is, finally, an accurate portrayal of mountain gorilla conservation as it is today.

The book is so good I really had to dredge to find criticisms. The status of the eastern lowland gorilla gives no grounds, I believe, for the complacency that I might have detected in Schaller's introduction. For reasons of organizational loyalty, I would also have liked to have seen more mention of FFPS's continuing role in channelling support into the work. I recognize, however, that this would have required comparable mention of the many other bodies that have played important parts in gorilla conservation and the African Wildlife Foundation is, after all, the key field management organization. These comments constitute minor carpings.

Here, then, is a book I recommend  
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without hesitation to anyone who really wants to know what mountain gorilla conservation is all about.

Roger Wilson, *FFPS Consultant to the Mountain Gorilla Project*

## Tiger Moon

Fiona and Mel Sunquist

University of Chicago Press, 1988, 183 pp., HB £19.95

Twenty years ago the tiger was heading for extinction while its life in the wild was largely a mystery. But in the early 1970s the World Wildlife Fund launched Operation Tiger to stop the rot. Financial aid was given to the Smithsonian Institution of Washington DC for a long-term study of the ecology of the tiger in the Royal Chitwan National Park in Nepal.

Mel Sunquist spent two years with a team of American and Nepalese scientists. He and his biologist wife, Fiona, have written a vivid account of adventures catching tigers, radio-collaring and tracking them. They evoke the joys and trials of jungle life—burning heat and bitter cold according to the season; riding elephants, each with a distinct personality, through towering grasses safe from irritated rhinos; the dominating routine of data collection. They also portray the problems of local people living close to tigers and wild animals that raid their crops.

A terrifying experience occurred when an angry tigress dragged colleague Kirti Man Tamang from a tree. Sunquist's elephant bolted and fell, pitching him to the ground, stunned. Eventually, an elephant was persuaded to approach badly mauled Kirti, who was recovered. The tigress did not attack him on the ground. On another occasion Fiona sat paralysed in her photo-hide while a known bad-tempered rhino ate the side. He wandered away without apparently detecting her.

Tiger Moon neatly summarizes what was learnt of the life of Chitwan's tigers. Twenty-five tigers, as well as leopards and some other species, were radio-collared, enabling Sunquist and his colleagues to follow movements and associations, locate kills, and find cubs, which they tracked when they left their mothers.

The tiger ecology project resulted in the extension of the Chitwan Park, and provided valuable data relevant to wildlife management elsewhere. From the Sunquists' book we know that all involved had a lot of fun too.

Peter Jackson, *Chairman, IUCN/SSC Cat Specialist Group, 1172 Bougy, Switzerland*

## The Trout and Salmon Handbook—a Guide to the Wild Fish

Robin Ade

Christopher Helm, London, 122 pp., HB £12.95

From two statements on the first pages to the effect that: (i) the Pleistocene began 100 million years ago (p. 2) and (ii) the salmoniforms (*sic*) are the oldest order of bony fishes (p. 1), it could only be hoped that this book would get better. A false hope, although some slight compensation is that the book did not get worse.

According to the jacket flap, this book is the 'definitive guide to all the Salmon, Trout and Char'. It is not. However, I am unclear what this book is. It does not cater for the natural historian, nor the conservationist, nor the fisheries biologist, nor the angler, nor the artist. A reader in any of these categories would be better served elsewhere.

The taxonomy is poor and no reason is given for the exclusion of genera and the inclusion of certain species. The book purports to offer a simple account of the natural history of the species,

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